Prolegomenon

An Entry to the Relative Framework

By Dean Tyldesley

Abstract

This paper establishes the foundational entry conditions required to engage with the Relative Framework. It formalizes the Knowledge Acquisition Paradox, the Two-Tier Identity Model, and the Cognitive Arc as structural components governing observer development. It introduces relational emergence as the ontological basis of the system and concludes with the principle of Epistemic Closure, which reframes understanding as internal resolution through representational coherence rather than external certainty. The purpose of this Prolegomenon is to ensure that readers approach the framework without importing assumptions that would distort its architecture.

1. The Knowledge Acquisition Paradox: Structural Limits of Understanding

The Relative Framework begins with the recognition that absolute knowledge is structurally unattainable. Traditional epistemology treats learning as a linear reduction of ignorance. The Knowledge Acquisition Paradox (KAP) formalizes the inverse: as knowledge K expands, the perceived unknown U increases at a faster, often non-linear rate.

This is not a psychological failure but a mathematical property of exploration. Any expansion of an observer's informational domain exposes additional layers of uncharted structure. The KAP establishes the first entry condition: confusion is a structural gradient, not a cognitive deficiency.

2. The Two-Tier Identity Model: Dissolving the Singular Self Assumption

Engaging with the Relative Framework requires abandoning the assumption of a unified, intrinsic Self. Identity is formalized as a two-tier system:

Structural Identity (S_1)

A deterministic, pre-reflective generative substrate shaped by biological, historical, and environmental constraints. S_1 produces impulses, preferences, and behavioural tendencies prior to conscious awareness.

Narrative Identity (S_2)

A post-hoc narrative interpreter that organizes and contextualizes S_1 outputs. S_2 does not originate thought; it constructs coherence around the outputs of S_1.

The Illusion of Choice emerges from the temporal sequence in which S_1 generates an impulse and S_2 retroactively constructs a narrative of agency. Recognizing this separation is the first step toward Cognitive Compression, as it removes the narrative interference created by misattributing authorship to S_2.

3. The Cognitive Arc: A Six-Stage Refinement Module

Cognitive development within the Relative Framework is defined not by intelligence, but by representational economy. The Cognitive Arc formalizes this progression as a six-stage refinement module:

1. The Absorber

High-volume intake with minimal internal structure.

2. The Weaver

Associative ordering of experiences; emergence of pattern recognition.

3. The Compressor

Abstraction and reduction of redundancy into compact, transferable mental models.

4. The Reflector

Internal examination of cognitive structures, biases, and assumptions.

5. The Recursive

Metacognitive modelling of one's own modelling processes; self-referential refinement.

6. The Transcendent

Representational coherence becomes sufficient; external expression becomes redundant.

The Arc is not hierarchical in value but structural in function. Each stage represents a shift in representational architecture, culminating in a system that no longer requires externalization to maintain stability.

4. Relational Emergence: The Ontology of Interaction

The Relative Framework rejects intrinsic properties. All phenomena emerge from relational entanglement. The canonical example is "wetness": wetness is not a property of water alone but arises only through interaction with a surface.

Meaning, consciousness, time, and identity follow the same principle. They are emergent properties of interacting systems, not standalone entities. This ontological stance is required to interpret both the Cognitive Arc and the KAP without reverting to essentialist assumptions.

5. Epistemic Closure: Resolution Through Representational Coherence

The endpoint of the Cognitive Arc is not truth acquisition but resolution. As representational economy increases, internal conflicts diminish, and the observer transitions from a state of chaotic seeking to a coherent internal system.

Epistemic Closure does not claim access to objective truth. Instead, it denotes the condition in which the observer's internal lexicon, models, and constraints achieve sufficient alignment to eliminate representational conflict.

Understanding becomes internally complete, even as the external unknown remains unbounded.

Conclusion

This Prolegomenon establishes the conceptual posture required to engage with the Relative Framework. It introduces the structural limits of knowledge, the architecture of identity, the developmental refinement of cognition, and the relational ontology underpinning the system. These components form the necessary entry conditions for interpreting the framework without distortion.

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